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SUBJECT: TURKEY: ADANA REGION SEES SPIKE IN VIOLENCE IN LEAD-UP TO ANNIVERSARY OF OCALAN'S CAPTURE

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Increasing incidents of violence in Kurdish-populated areas of Adana's consular district may be related to the upcoming February 15 anniversary of the capture of PKK terrorist leader Abdullah Ocalan. Local and regional anti-terrorism units are preparing for possible demonstrations, street clashes, and Molotov cocktail bombings as the date approaches. Upcoming local elections in March may see more violence as the PKK seeks to demonstrate its continuing relevance and the government's impotence. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Adana: Law enforcement contacts confirm press reports citing arson attacks on the evenings of January 27 and 28, bringing the total number of such assaults to 17 in the past ten days. In the first incident, unidentified assailants set fire to four civilian vehicles bearing Turkish flags on their windshields. Firat news agency indicates the "Yektiya Ciwanen Kurdistan" group claimed responsibility. In Adana, the last month has seen a significant rise in attacks against private vehicles displaying national Turkish symbols. On the evening of the January 28, attackers threw Molotov cocktails and stones at storefronts in a commercial area. Police reported no injuries, and have detained nine suspects.

¶3. (SBU) Tarsus, Mersin Province: Provincial Counter-Terrorism Chief Salih Koken confirmed on Saturday, January 24, a group of people wearing ski masks attacked a city bus with two Molotov cocktails. While the bus sustained damage, there were no reports of injuries. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but law enforcement contacts suspect PKK sympathizers were behind it.

¶4. (SBU) Sogut, Hatay Province: According to military and media reports, on Saturday, January 24, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorist organization detonated an explosive device near a transmitter station of Turkcell phone company. One person was injured in the attack. Adana's local security chief told us the attack bears all the markings of a PKK strike, and was likely planned to disrupt commercial activity.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Law enforcement officials in southeastern Turkey are readying themselves for increased violence in the lead-up to February 15, the 10th anniversary of Ocalan's capture in Kenya. If past is prologue, police will follow their usual strategy of catch-and-release, or "preemptive detentions," to disrupt potential troublemakers and organizers of violence. The looming March local elections provide another pretext for the PKK, which wants to stress Turkish-Kurdish divisions (and the Kurds' victim status). DTP leader Ahmet Turk's has stated that the election results will be a referendum on the existence of the Kurds, meaning that voting for AKP is a denial of your Kurdishness. END COMMENT.

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